

July 29, 2005

Dear Friend,

Today, after finally passing a Transportation Reauthorization bill, ([click here](#)), Congress has adjourned for the month of August. While the first seven months of the 109th Congress have yielded some positive legislative action, there are still many critical issues that have not been addressed by the leadership of the House.

One of the most important problems facing our state is the cost of health insurance, which contributes a great deal to the number of people without health insurance in our state and nation. As you may know, the state of New Mexico ranks near the bottom in the number of individuals who have health insurance. In addition, it is estimated that nationwide more than 45 million Americans now lack health insurance. Since 2000, the cost of health insurance has risen by 59 percent. Furthermore, since January 2001, the number of Americans without health insurance has grown by 5.2 million – now reaching 45 million. Yet, Congress has not taken action to cut health care costs or significantly reduce the number of uninsured. For more information please [click here](#).

In addition, Congress has not taken action to help our struggling economy. Instead of enacting measures to help make U.S. businesses more competitive and create better paying jobs here at home, this week the majority passed the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), a bad trade bill that will cost America jobs and harm the U.S. economy ([click here](#)). Further, Congress continues to ignore the enormous budget deficits that, along with a record trade deficit, threaten to further increase interest rates and slow our economy.

This Congress has also repeatedly sold our nation's veterans short. Unfortunately, underfunding of veterans' health care is not just an issue that has come up during the 109th Congress. During the past two years my colleagues and I have attempted to provide additional funding to meet our obligation to the growing number of returning veterans. But these efforts have been defeated, with the majority and the President claiming the funding was not needed. Finally, on June 23 of this year, the Veterans' Affairs Department admitted that there was a \$1 billion shortfall for this year. After more than a month of calling for steps to address this shortfall, the majority finally took steps to close the funding gap for this fiscal year, but there is more to be done. Unfortunately this is only a band-aid to a worsening situation. There is also a huge shortfall in veterans' health care for the upcoming year. For more information please [click here](#).

Congress can do better and I am hopeful that in the months remaining when we return from the August district work-period, Congress will address the issues of homeland security, health insurance, stimulating the economy, veterans healthcare, retirement security, improving education and the many other critically important issues facing our state and nation. Please click here for more information about issues affecting our veterans please [click here](#).

Very Truly Yours,

Tom Udall
Member of Congress